

Joseph Eckler
Osborne Hill Rd Ext
Sandy Hook, CT 06482
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To members of the committee,
RE: Senate Bill #1012

My name is Joseph Eckler; I am legally blind and have been helped by Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) since the age of 5. I am against the Governor's Bill No. 1012 which would split BESB. Currently I attend Western Connecticut State University with support from my Vocational Rehabilitation counselor and Orientation & Mobility instructor from BESB.

In my junior year at high school I began to worry because I did not feel prepared for the transition to college. My vocational rehabilitation counselor from BESB, whom I have known since I was 16 and my teacher of the visually impaired, advocated for me and helped me figure out plans for after high school. These individuals knew me and my strengths and challenges because they had been on my educational team. We worked together to find a college transition program at Mitchell college that fit my needs. I believe that if I had to change agencies and staff at this time I would not have had my needs met. During this college transition year my BESB vocational rehabilitation counselor checked in with me and the program directors to be sure my vision impairment needs were being addressed. I gained many skills at this program, ones that I need to be successful at college, most importantly the skill to advocate for my needs.

When considering the proposed split of BESB, and the fact that a new agency would have taken over my case at my high school transition time, I feel that it would have made this transition much more difficult and stressful. In fact I don't think my need of a transition program before full blown college would have happened.

I don't believe that the services will be the same if BESB is split. BESB, as it exists now, is a valuable resource for me. It has provided many much needed training programs at its agency and around the state that I have benefitted from. If it is split, it will undoubtedly become weaker and may no longer be in the position to be the supportive program it has been for most of my life.

Thank you for your consideration,
Joseph Eckler